

CURRICULUM FOR EXCELLENCE WORKING GROUP ON TACKLING BUREAUCRACY





Albert Einstein is reputed to have said that “bureaucracy is the death of sound work.” The sound work that teachers and local authorities are accomplishing through Curriculum for Excellence (CfE) must not be stifled by unnecessary bureaucracy. That is why the Cabinet Secretary announced at the EIS’s AGM earlier this year that the Scottish Government will work with teacher associations, local authorities and other partners to develop ways in which we can tackle needless bureaucracy.

I have chaired the Group and our message is clear: the purpose of CfE is to promote better teaching and learning. This must not be obscured by bureaucracy and unnecessary paperwork. That is unacceptable and needs to stop now.

This statement shows how it can be stopped. We have set out some key messages and actions that everyone in education should take over the current school year to root out pointless bureaucracy and enable CfE to grow and flourish.

Dr Alasdair Allan, Minister for Learning, Science and Scotland’s Languages



ABOUT THE GROUP

The CfE Working Group on Tackling Bureaucracy was established following a commitment by Michael Russell, Cabinet Secretary for Education and Lifelong Learning at the EIS’s AGM to tackle concerns over unnecessary bureaucracy associated with the implementation of Curriculum for Excellence.

The Group was chaired by Dr Alasdair Allan, Minister for Learning, Science and Scotland’s Languages, and tasked with identifying the main drivers around excessive bureaucracy relating to the implementation of CfE and making proposals for addressing the issues involved.


KEY MESSAGES

Scotland's approach to teaching and learning – Curriculum for Excellence (CfE) – is about empowering teachers to improve outcomes for pupils. This new approach is bringing real benefits. However, in some cases, too much paperwork and overly complex processes are getting in the way of teaching and learning. This needs to be addressed. **Everyone** has a part to play in tackling excessive bureaucracy.

More specifically:

- » Professional dialogue is key to improving learning. Paperwork should be kept to the minimum required to support this process.
- » Forward planning is a professional tool to assist teaching and learning. Teachers should plan to the **level of detail** which will work best for their pupils. This will vary with the teacher's level of experience, familiarity with the material and preferred style, so there should not be a "one-size-fits-all" approach. Daily plans should be brief and mainly for teachers' use (e.g. a diary approach.)



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- » Forward planning should be proportionate; there is no need to plan, assess, record and report at the level of each and every Experience and Outcome. It is almost always better to **group together** related Experiences and Outcomes and focus on the most significant aspects of teaching and learning.
 - » Forward planning should support professional dialogue rather than simply fulfil an audit function.
 - » Whole school approaches to self-evaluation play a key role in improving performance but over-reliance on audit and “tick box” approaches can distract from high quality teaching and learning. Self-evaluation **should focus only on the key information required to support improvement.**
 - » **ICT planning and reporting systems should be used with caution.** There should be a realistic evaluation of the time required to utilise such systems and this should be factored in to school improvement plans. Just because such systems *can* support very detailed planning and reporting, does not mean they *should* be used in that way. What matters is that systems are used effectively to support and protect time for professional dialogue.
 - » **Parents** are looking for reports that give a clear, rounded personalised summary of their child’s learning and progress. They want good quality conversations with teachers that feel personal and specific to their child. The paperwork needs to support this rather than becoming an end in itself.
 - » Report card formats and other arrangements for reporting should avoid jargon and “tick box” approaches such as covering each and every Experience and Outcome.
 - » Assessment judgements, particularly within broad general education but also in the senior phase of CfE, should be based on evidence drawn mainly **from day-to-day teaching and learning.** Tracking pupil progress and moderation is important; however, there is no need to produce large folios of evidence to support this. Assessment within CfE is based on the exercise of professional judgement.
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ACTIONS

The purpose of this statement is to trigger action at a range of levels. All the organisations represented on the Group have agreed the key messages and actions and commit to pursuing their implementation **over the current academic year 2013/14**. This should be reflected in local authority and school improvement plans. Current action plans should be reviewed in the light of these principles. Future action plans should reflect them.

All involved in delivering teaching and learning should:

- » ensure that their planning, monitoring and reporting systems are fit-for-purpose. They should be used in a way that maximises the time spent on teaching and learning, supports professional dialogue and avoids unnecessary workload.
- » ensure that reporting formats reflect CfE in that they revolve around narrative reporting rather than “tick box” approaches and that their approach is essentially holistic.

Schools and staff should:

- » ensure time for professional dialogue and support the development of staff confidence and professional trust in teachers.
- » review forward planning procedures to ensure that they are proportionate and support professional dialogue.
- » avoid excessive planning based upon assessing, recording and reporting at the level of individual Experiences and Outcomes.

Each Local Authority and Learning Community should:

- » challenge unnecessary bureaucracy in education services and schools.
- » take practical steps to improve school leadership skills and staff confidence in planning for learning with a view to discouraging excessive paperwork.
- » ensure that audit and accountability arrangements focus only on the most valuable information to make the greatest improvement.
- » regularly review the efficacy of ICT systems for planning and reporting, ensuring that they are fit-for-purpose and do not unnecessarily take time away from teaching.

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Education Scotland should:

- » use its inspection teams to challenge unnecessary bureaucracy in schools.
- » support improvement through professional dialogue and promote sharing and exemplification of good practice.
- » ensure that it does not itself create unnecessary paperwork for schools and staff. This includes working with local authorities and schools to clarify expectations and making sure that the documentation required for inspection purposes is kept to the minimum.
- » review its CfE website to ensure that national policy expectations are clear and guidance and support for CfE is made more easily accessible.

SQA and each Local Authority should:

- » ensure that national and local quality assurance processes are aligned and proportionate.
- » take practical steps to develop staff confidence in delivering verification procedures for new qualifications and streamlining these procedures if necessary.
- » regularly review guidance to highlight current advice and remove unnecessary and out-of-date material.

NPFS should:

- » work with parent groups to develop understanding and publicise more streamlined and effective reporting systems.

Scottish Negotiating Committee for Teachers and Local Negotiating Committees for Teachers should:

- » consider the outcome of the Group's work in the context of their existing role.
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THE GROUP IDENTIFIED THE MAIN DRIVERS OF EXCESSIVE BUREAUCRACY AS:

Over-detailed planning processes.

Planning at the level of every individual experience and outcome; planning with too many layers and too much repetition. A lack of balance between written planning and planning based on professional dialogue.

Assessment, tracking and reporting systems that are not fit-for-purpose.

Inappropriate use of ICT systems. Quality assurance and monitoring processes that make insufficient use of evidence from day-to-day teaching and learning; and sometimes cumbersome approaches to profiling and reporting to parents.

Adopting rather than adapting.

Inflexible use of “one size fits all” approaches to CfE rather than adapting to suit local circumstances.

Unnecessary auditing and accountability.

Local authorities sometimes requiring excessive detail for auditing and accountability. Schools over-preparing for inspections based on misunderstandings about Education Scotland’s expectations.

Lack of confidence.

Headteachers and staff still need to gain full confidence in the changes that they are making to their practices. This leads to detailed approaches being adopted in the developmental phase which could be – but are often not – reduced as familiarity and confidence grows.

Unclear expectations.

Uncertainty over what schools have to do, should do and can choose to do in implementing CfE.

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WORKING GROUP MEMBERS

ADES	–	Association of Directors of Education in Scotland
AHDS	–	Association of Heads and Deputes in Scotland
COSLA	–	Convention of Scottish Local Authorities

Education Scotland

EIS	–	The Educational Institute of Scotland
NASUWT	–	National Association of Schoolmasters/ Union of Women Teachers
NPFS	–	The National Parent Forum of Scotland

The Scottish Government

SLS	–	School Leaders Scotland
SQA	–	Scottish Qualifications Authority
SSTA	–	Scottish Secondary Teachers Association
Voice		

Further information is available on the Group's website:
[http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Education/Schools/
CfEtacklingbureaucracygroup](http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Education/Schools/CfEtacklingbureaucracygroup)



**The Scottish
Government**
Riaghaltas na h-Alba

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ISBN: 978-1-78412-066-5

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the Scottish Government website: www.scotland.gov.uk

APS Group Scotland DPPAS19832 (11/13)